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GLANCES AT NEW BOOKS.

Fort Risbane; or, Three Days' Quarantine. By a Détenu.

London, Smith, Elder, and Co. 1832.

The readers of Headlong Hall will recognise in the present volume a work written after the model of that lively and piquant satire. Like its prototype we have here a variety of persons collected together, each the strenuous advocate of a particular theory; and having that theory so constantly before his mental vision as to fancy in every object and event something upon which it bears. To what extent the author has had living persons in his eye we know not; but we imagine that some, at least, of his characters are portraits; Mr Cyclovate we should guess, was meant for Dr Bowring, and Mr M'Corquodale for Mr M'Culloch. We hazard the mention of these names without scruple, as the satire is perfectly good-natured, and nothing is put into the mouths of those gentlemen, at which they might justly take offence.

Fort Risbane is the name of the place to which passengers to Calais were restricted during the prevalence of the Cholera some months ago; and the conversations of which the volume is made up are represented as having taken place among the passengers of a Steam-boat, while they were performing quarantine. One of the characters, Mr Pungent, is a sort of laughing philosopher, and exempt from the prevalent surrounding weakness; and there are others who have little or nothing specially characteristic.

'Among the passengers one young man was to be noticed, going to and fro from one group to another, gathering from each some information, or some materials for the indulgence of mirth. His laughing eye told that he loved a joke better than an argument; while according to phrenologists, the well-defined undulations of his forehead redeemed him from the reproach of frivolity, and marked him for a reasoning as well as a reasonable creature.

'The desultory part which he took in the passing scene was, however, at length changed for one of more individual interest; and he was well pleased to remain stationary for a while, in conversation with two of his fellow-passengers. These were Mr and Miss Hartley, an elderly gentleman and his daughter. The countenance of the former exhibited traces of deep suffering, and told that his life had not passed unchequered,—that it had been spent in many climes, and visited by many trials; while the solicitude he evinced for the lovely and delicate looking girl who was reclining by his side, shewed that at least one blessing had been spared to him, and that he was tremblingly apprehensive lest this too might be snatched away.

'"Our situation is indeed a novel one," said Mr Hartley, in reply to a remark made by Mr Pungent, the gentleman who had just entered into conversation with him. "When we arrive in the midst of population we shall be shut out from the rest of the world, within limits which would oblige us to be constantly in each other's society—to eat from the same board—nay, I am told, to sleep in the same apartments. The narrow boundaries of this vessel do not throw us so completely together as we must of necessity be for a time when on land."

'"I hope, then," said Mr Pungent, "that under these circumstances, we shall lay aside our English surliness, and, borrowing some of their vivacity from our neighbours, play the agreeable to each other."'

Pungent undertakes to describe the principal characters, and we shall take down some of his descriptions, that our readers may exercise their guessing faculty upon them.

'The Rev. Orthodox Tythinkind—He who has enveloped himself in a camphorated, chlorine, pyroligneous acid atmosphere, and sits shaking at the approach of every one, fearing the attacks of cholera under every form. He is called one who, I have heard, holds more livings than he preaches sermons in the year, and who takes more care of the loaves and fishes than of the spiritual welfare of his parishioners.'

We fear there is no chance of this being merely an individual portrait.

'That self-important looking personage at some distance to the left of him, is a man of literature. As he glances round he seems plainly to say. I am the learned Mr Scrinium, the great editor! That g-ntlemanly-looking man near the helm is Mr Pertinax, a writer of periodical literature; moreover, he is a fellow of all the learned societies throughout Europe; associate of the Royal Society at Timbuctoo, and Honorary Member of the Anti-Reform Society in the Moon. That gentleman, with a sensible countenance is Mr Cyclovate, a well-known literary character—having a reputation in the political as well as literary world, is about to publish anthologies of Otaheite, and a statement of the finances of the King of the Sandwich Islands. The name of that vinegar visaged, forbidding looking person, is Pyrotic, *noli me tangere* eligibly written on his countenance. This vinegar visaged gentleman offers a strong contrast to Mr Benignus, a good humoured looking man, in whom there appears the alkali, which would neutralize all the acidity of his neighbour Mr M'Corquodale.'

We have, besides, Mrs Benignus, a pleasing-looking woman; Captain O'Lucre, on his way to join Don Pedro; Mr and Mrs Scribbleton, author and authoress, illustrating the proverb—'two of a trade never agree;' Mr Goodenough, a rich merchant, with his wife and two daughters; Mr Deroi, a French royalist, lately returned from Holyrood; Mr Ouvert, a republican; the Hon. Augustus Manikin, a fashionable dandy; Mr M'Molitor, a chemist and projector; Mr Stirps, a vulgar-featured man; and lastly, Mr M'Corquodale, the political economist.

With such a company there could be no want of food for conversation; and accordingly we find all sorts of subjects introduced, personal peculiarities drawn out, and a variety of opinions and remarks, sensible, witty, narrow-minded, prejudiced, eccentric, yet all more or less amusing and instructive. After due denunciation from all parties, of the restrictions to which they are subjected, the cholera very naturally becomes the topic of conversation; and all the diversities of opinion as to its nature, cause, &c. &c. with which everybody is familiar, are severally repeated.

An argument on free and restricted trade leads to a

dispute between Mr Goodenough, the merchant, and Mr Pungent; the former is for encouraging Englishmen and discountenancing foreigners at all events; but does not see very clearly the working of particular measures. He assents to a proposition of Pungent's, that if he could obtain any manufactured goods from a Frenchman living in the next street, he would really consent to send a dozen miles beyond, to buy a less suitable article from an English dealer. By and by, cards are required, which Pungent undertakes to procure, but powerfully excites the bile of Goodenough, by giving him an illustration of his principles.

'"These cards are a long time before they arrive," said Mr Goodenough, starting up from a short nap; "in England messengers are more diligent."

'"I was assured the utmost despatch should be used," replied Mr Pungent; "but the messenger has to go some distance."

'*Mr Goodenough.* "What have they no playing cards in Calais?"

'*Mr Pungent.* "Oh! yes; in ten minutes time excellent playing cards might be procured; but an Englishman, who is settled about six miles from hence manufactures them. Knowing your opinions, I could not hesitate to send to our countryman. I am told they are rather inferior, and the expense of sending for them will somewhat enhance the cost; but to that you say you have no objection."

'*Mr Goodenough.* "'Sdeath, Sir, when did I ever utter such an absurdity?"

'*Mr Pungent.* "No longer ago than this morning, Sir."'

The following conversation is on a subject which it is desirable should be well understood. The author seems to recognise the 'greatest happiness principle,' of the Utilitarians, but to shew that it is the Christian rule rendered less explicit.

'*Mr Hartley.* There has been much said and written about the greatest happiness principle. But every man forms a different estimate of happiness.

"Some place their bliss in action, some in ease."

How then are we to be agreed as to what is the greatest happiness, since each endeavours to reach the goal by a path of his own tracing?

'*Mr M'Corquodale.* Truth, when once made manifest, must be universally acknowledged.

'*Mr Hartley.* But if the happiness of one party be inimical to the happiness of another?

'*Mr Cyclovate.* The greatest aggregate of happiness, reckoning in kind, duration, and degree, must always be sought; we are not to consider individual cases, but the whole mass. It is a reference to this principle which, in disputed cases, distinguishes the true from the pseudo morality.

'*Mr Pungent.* This would lead to very pernicious results, and has already led to the promulgation of a great deal of nonsense.

'*Mr M'Corquodale.* That remark only evinces your total ignorance of the subject, Sir.

'*Mr Pungent.* What say you to this? "If, for example, it was ever contended that it was a moral act for a man to kill and eat his father, it was supported on the ground that it was for the happiness of society and of themselves that men, on arriving at a certain stage of decrepitude, should be put out of pain, and that it was a mark of respect for their sons to eat them. There may be doubt whether the reasoning was good, but there is none that this was the reasoning.' The Utilitarian school strangely mystifies and confuses the plainest rules of morality.

'*Mr Cyclovate.* On the contrary, it demonstrates clearly, that for "individuals—societies—nations—to 'do as they would be done by,' is sound earthly policy."

'*Mr Pungent.* Proving what has been proved more than eighteen centuries back; wrapping in obscurity a beautifully simple precept, which can be brought home to every bosom. There is nothing vague, nothing undefined in this; it embraces the whole code of morality; and a man can walk in the high path of duty, can never doubt as to the rectitude of his actions, if they satisfactorily evince that he has complied with the injunction, "Do as you would be done unto." Although men may want to be told that this is their duty, yet few would dissent from its truth. To preach this doctrine is therefore useful; but to pretend to it as a modern discovery is absurd; while its new name, "the greatest happiness principle," at once involves us in a maze of perplexities. How much more difficult to answer, "What is for the greatest happiness of man?" than to learn the simple rule to "do unto others as we would be done unto." Thus, then, the modern innovation deprives the precept of the Divine moralist of that wide extended application which caused it to be of practical utility alike to the ignorant and to the wise.'

The extracts we have given may afford some idea of the book; it throughout manifests superior sense and good feeling, and the conversations are, generally speaking, well and pleasantly sustained. The character of the parson is a little outré, a fault to which writers are prone.

From the style and tone of the work, we should think it proceeded from the same hand as those amusing fictions, Truckleborough Hall, Penelope, &c. However this may be, the present volume will repay the attention of all who can excuse, in a light work, a reasonable quantity of observations of a useful and solid character.

CANAL TRAVELLING.—ROCHESTER.

SAM PATCH.

On the morning of the day Sam agreed to jump down the perpendicular rock of the Genesee Falls (exactly where Galt makes Hoskins's 'Skow' topple over, himself and Todd clinging to the branch). There was not a hotel bar in all the town but witnessed a double activity in the serving out of julup, sling, toddy, and negus; great was the coil of betting and disputing whether he would do it or not. The rock is certainly from 90 to 100 feet high; and at this spot, between the great and lesser branch of the cataract, it is covered with a green carpet, and shadowed almost to the verge by very picturesque and pretty trees; the few left of the identical old foresters of 'Zerobabel's' days of exploration. On this very verge the knowing ones had erected a scaffolding of at least twenty feet high, as Sam said a few feet more or less in the leap down was 'no odds.' Sam was poor, and could'nt muster many dollars to risk on his own head; but a few he did muster—borrowed; for all his own had long made part of the pelf of the various tavern-keepers all along that line, from the Great Mohawk Falls to the Big Niagara; in short, Sam was given to drinking, and led a sort of vagabond life, such as one may well imagine a young fellow would fall into, who got his living through the summer, diving into the various gulfs and rapids for the amusement of the fun-hunting ladies and gemmen of the various parts of the Union. I mentioned in my last, that Sam's greatest feat was jumping off a scaffolding just below Goat Island, at Niagara, some 120 feet into the foaming eddy below, the summer before (1829). Sam, had he stuck to his axe and plough, was to have married a neighbour's daughter; and on this day he had some conversation with his brother about it. Giving him a nudge at the bar, they walked out under the stoop (piazza) to say a word or two in case——Sam felt queer; he was out of order; and was not so sanguine as he always had been. To remedy this, he had already drank so many drams among those who backed him, that he was by this time in a staggering condition, and his brother, who appears to have been more considerate, begged

him to forfeit, as he was in no condition to jump that day; but that ambition which sways us just as much in little as great things, to evil or to good, made this ill-fated fellow obstinate as a mule; jump he would; and after giving his watch to his brother, to hold, or to keep if he rose no more, back they went to the bar; and just then the grand processions of all the town, man, woman, and child, headed by the more noisy 'fancy' of the place, took their way, cheering as they went along, down to the place. It created a sort of mixed sensation, between a horse-race and an execution! for the leap, if he did take it (which many at the moment yet doubted) was the most ugly he had yet adventured.

They say poor Sam was very drunk; but like all drunken men in moments of great excitement, he staggered less, and walked down with his brother, in the midst of all the hubbub, in the very spirit of bravado. At the foot of the scaffolding he stripped of his clothes, and tying a handkerchief round his waist, clambered up and stood for a moment on the upper scantling thwart, which *plum'd* the raging gulf below. And now was all hushed in breathless anxiety! His brother to the last held him by the hand, and urged him not, but he would not be advised. Waving his hand as a signal to look out, he sprang off feet foremost as he always went, and as is best in leaps of this kind,—the feet close together, and arms close by the side,—head erect. As he descended those who were on the left bank, close the to Many Mill Races, said he appeared bent up; and so gave him over at once—for falling on the waters below from such a height must have been like falling on solid rock, striking with any flat surface of the body, and so it turned out, he was never seen alive again; indeed, if I mistake not, was never found at all, though they had several boats below the falls waiting to pick him up, in the nearest circling eddy,—the fact was, the leap was too hazardous, he had drank himself out of that steady coolness fit for such danger, and losing his upright position as he went down, was quite enough to kill him. I have never heard the mood the *betting* people went home in, doubtless it was various,—those who *won* might feel as our sporting men do who win, though very possibly the losing jockey has broke his neck, which is not their business! So ended Sam Patch; and most of the taverns and canal-boats have pictures of him, in this his last act. I walked about up one street and down another at Rochester, and peeped in at the various stores, some of them well stored and garnished, and backside the door with Buffalo-hides and Bear-skins, vast quantities of India-rubber shoes, and great bales of various coarse cotton goods, which serve at once for seats where the traders smoke their cigars, and to shew that they deal largely, notices of the 'highest price' being allowed for wheat, oats, corn, rye, &c. are stuck up in the most endless emulation, to encourage the farmers who come in from the country round in their slight waggons loaded with their homely produce, taking back groceries, salt pork, shad, and various muslins and clothes for their better halves. I said, in my last, that I heard the dinner-bell ring—at the—no matter—the most fashionable hotel. I ran for it, but Lord bless ye, what signifies running! I was this side an old mill, already going to ruin on the river-side, in the centre of the place,—I ran hard—arrived breathless, the table was already full, however, by dint of going down one side and half-way round the other with a sort of inquiring look—an opening was at length just made visible, when a spare chair being silently insinuated, I found there was just a 'wreck left behind,' thanking the Gods, I fell to work, just breathing a pious resolve never to extend my excursions beyond the bar-room, where the *élite* of the army is drawn up just before feeding-time. It is incalculable, the value of time on these occasions: if people will speculate, and ruminate, and perambulate, let them do it in any of the hundreds of minutes of the twenty-four hours not so very pressing and precious. Hardly had I swallowed half my dinner, when the boat was announced as 'ready to start,' and away we all went on board. In these boats, let me here observe, they make it a rule to feed you as seldom as possible, so that you may always dine or breakfast on shore as often as possible. Thus, they contrive to stop, or arrive, or set-out, just as dinner or breakfast is on table at the various hotels, which have a perfect understanding on the subject, and know that you prefer more room, and a greater variety of dishes, than the boat can afford. This is very kind and considerate, and paying twice for the same thing, is but a trifling homage to an acute and anxious management of your comforts.—Rochester is the largest town in all this part of the State; containing 12 or 13,000 souls, and is famous for the manufactures of *Rifles*, machinery of various sorts, and *flour*.—The 'water-power' leading itself on either bank to innumerable mills, that are encreasing and growing more and more valuable every day.

THEATRICALS.

MADAME SCHROEDER DEVRIENT'S FIDELIO.

[Madame Schroeder Devrient's merits are not of an ordinary kind, and therefore any exuberance of eulogy in the following article must be attributed to that restlessness of feeling, which, under circumstances of unusual gratification, finds the ordinary language of praise too weak to satisfy its sense of justice.]

GERMAN OPERA—KING'S THEATRE.

FIGURE to yourself a rather over-fat woman of thirty, dressed in boy's clothes,—with light-coloured hair,—small grey eyes with invisible lashes,—no eye-brows,—and altogether a somewhat flat German visage;—and then imagine her so *rayonnante* with moral and intellectual beauty,—such a personification of all that is good, and great, and sweet, and lovely, in woman's nature—so beautiful a specimen of a soul untouched by the world, and with all its holiest affections and noblest qualities fresh as from the hands of the Creator, that she becomes beautiful beyond imagining,—a creature of light and love, in whose radiance you long to rekindle in your heart, all of good and generous that has ever faded from it. Imagine all this, and you behold Madame Schroeder Devrient in the character of *Fidelio*, in Beethoven's opera of that name. As the piece proceeds, she gradually grows beautiful; her eyes brighten,—her features refine and beautify,—her curls seem to become more waving and ambrosial, and she undergoes a sort of transfiguration, like a disguised angel who should put off his earthly shape, and resume his heavenly beauty and angelic array;—until at last, when with looks of unutterable joy she nestles her head in the bosom of her newly recovered husband, and her rich silken ringlets fall through his fingers, we thought we had rarely seen such beautiful tresses, or so lovely a head.

The story of this opera is soon told. The husband of a Spanish Lady is thrown into a secret dungeon through the machinations of an enemy, on pretence of a state crime. The wife, disguised in boy's clothes, hires herself as a servant to the gaoler, for the purpose of endeavouring to effect the deliverance of her husband; and, after the manner of such stories, succeeds in making her way

to his dungeon exactly in time to throw herself between him and the assassin, at the moment that his long captivity is to be ended by the stroke of a dagger. Of course, at this precise moment arrives the good governor of the fortress; his wicked lieutenant—the enemy and intended murderer of *Florestan* (the husband) is driven forth, and all goes merrily, as poor humanity loves to order the visions of its imagination. The music is passion made vocal; sometimes full of deep woe,—then breathing hope, and again exulting in joy, or hymning subdued strains of religious gratitude and serene happiness. The overture is exquisitely beautiful, opening with some bold chords, succeeded by low soft strains, that might be called celestial, did they not breathe too deeply of human feeling. Whether these delicate tones were produced by wind or wire, by bow or finger, it was difficult to determine, for they sounded of none of these things; and it would have been pain and grief to dispel the gathering illusion by an enquiry into matters of wood and catgut,—but we suspect they might have been traced by the curious to Spagnoletti's violin. The mechanism of the orchestra was forgotten as the plaintive strains seemed to tell of poor *Fidelio's* sorrows,—her love, her constancy and courage, and—as they gradually mounted into notes of exultation—of her final success. The first striking display of Madame Schroeder's wonderful talents is the recitative and air, *Abscheulicher! wo eilst du hin?* But the 2nd act contains the triumph of her powers, both as a singer and an actress. The fine music of the dungeon scene had every aid that could be given by the most perfect singing and acting. When Leonora springs between the assassin and her husband, and covering the latter with her person, exclaims, '*Tödte erst sein Weib!*' the wild shrieking note upon the last word produced a thrill upon the nerves that was not to be resisted. Even *we* (meaning an individual of the painstaking class of men ycleped penny-a-line, which seems to have fallen heir to the peculiar use and dignity of that once awful pronoun, which, in the palmy days of reviews, stood the imposing representative of all knowledge and wisdom and criticism,) *we*—accustomed as we are in the daily sorrows of mankind to see only a paragraph, and to measure all earthly events by the number of lines they will produce—even we felt as though we had a narrow escape from a demonstration of feeling from which we had long supposed ourselves secure. The acting here was exquisitely true to nature. Without one glance at her husband, one look of recognition, she stood before him presenting a pistol at the assassin, in the attitude of fear converted into courage by desperation,—the crouching posture and fixed gaze of a wild cat ready to spring upon the hunter who has approached her young. But the scene that followed was the gem of the whole. Its beauty, its gladness, its deep and full delight, no pen can describe, or imagination without seeing and hearing, conceive. She seemed to strive to stand and gaze at her husband, but staggered as though giddy and reeling with the intoxication of joy; and when, after letting her head drop upon his shoulder, she raised it, again to gaze on him, her beauty was almost too heart-touching to be looked at without tears. There is some beautiful music at the moment the chains are removed from the hands of the liberated captive. A fear had occurred that there would be a repetition of the transports of the preceding scene; but both composer and actress were found still true to nature. When the chains fell, there was no accession of happiness, because it was already perfect and incapable of increase; but it was confirmed by an outward and visible sign; and she, whose womanly courage and generous devotedness had achieved all, came forward in the attitude of thanksgiving, and breathed forth strains of religious gratitude that, after the agitation of the preceding scenes, fell upon the ear and the heart like the freshness of dew.

It need hardly be said that at the conclusion of the piece, Madame Schroeder was loudly called for. She came forward, bowing gracefully in return for the tumultuous applause; and when she disappeared, we felt as though a friend had passed from our sight. A. B.

Surrey Theatre.

We anticipated great things from the cast of the *Hunchback* at this theatre, and we went fully disposed to do every justice to it; we have liked all along the spirit and talent with which the theatre has been conducted, and hoped in the present instance to have been able to say something in favour of its claims for a competent performance of the exclusive drama. The *Hunchback* is the finest effort of dramatic genius this country has been blest with since the days of Shakespeare, and when we say that with the performance of it at this theatre we were completely tired out, some notion may be formed of the inefficiency of the actors for their respective parts. Of Mrs West in *Julia*, a character of immense difficulty, it would be impossible to speak otherwise than in terms of regret, the more on account of the little regard she paid to the beautiful poetry entrusted to her care, now ranting, now monotonous to an excess of the somniferous, and occasionally so crying, that we feared the more judicious of the audience might be provoked into a hiss. Mr Elton in the *Hunchback*, and Mr Osbaldiston as *Modus*, were best, but even they we thought duller and tamer than usual. Mr Balls was the poorest *Sir Thomas Clifford* we have yet seen, and we have seen some three or four—next to Charles Kemble, we think Mr St Leon, who played that character for Mr Marston's benefit at the Queen's Theatre, most like in spirit and gentlemanliness to the admirable conception of its author.

S. W. H.

A True Remark.—Those who have serious calls on their time are always more willing to bestow a portion of it on others, than those who have no other pursuit save their own gratification.—*Fort Risbane.*

Amateur Smuggling.—The smuggling mania of the ladies is confined to the desire of bringing home the manufactures of *La Belle France*, and they have no pleasure in exerting their ingenuity to introduce into Foreign lands the produce of English industry; that is to say, they feel more disposed to elude the laws of their own country than those of another.—*Fort Risbane.*

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

We have great pleasure in being able to meet R. S. T.'s wishes; we have also to make him our acknowledgments on other accounts.

Zero shall hear from us.

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